



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

September 1-September 15, 2008

INFRASTRUCTURE



Members of the construction team worked overnight to lay the school's foundation.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

Foundation set for Kabul's New Ghazi High School:

The Ministry of Education achieved a significant milestone by laying the foundation of the new Ghazi Boy's High School in Kabul, Afghanistan. When completed in late 2009, this \$6.25 million school construction project will provide modern classrooms, laboratories, and other learning facilities for over 5,000 students, including the 1,750 students who currently study outside or in temporary shelters. The building is being constructed to the highest seismic safety standards to prevent tragic school collapses like those seen in recent earthquakes in Pakistan and China.

The successful concrete placement was the culmination of months of hard work to design and prepare the building foundation. USAID decided to pour the concrete overnight to avoid conflicts with the ongoing school operations and Kabul's notoriously bad daytime traffic. Laboring through the night, workers placed over 480 cubic meters (628 cubic yards) of reinforced concrete for the 1,200 square meter (13,000 square foot) foundation of the main building. When the school is completed, students will have access to education in a safe and modern environment.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

Local Governance and Community Development Training Yields Positive Results: In Nangarhar Province, USAID training sessions at the Department of Education have vastly improved performances. According to the Department of Education's Director Muhammad Iqbal Azizi, these courses, along with a new USAID-appointed technical advisor, have benefited as many as 150 education officials.

The results of better administration can be seen around Nangarhar. This year, around 60 school buildings have been erected so far and enrollment has increased, with students who used to study in neighboring countries now able to learn in Afghanistan. Continued technical training, Director Azizi explained, would lend the Department of Education a great boost.



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Helmand's Government Servants Acquire Valuable Organizational Skills: Employees of Helmand's Departments of Economy, Education and Public Health have lauded training programs conducted by USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) program.

Noor Muhammad, an employee of the Economy Department, learned English, basic computer skills, filing, reporting, writing and drafting agendas for meetings. He gained this knowledge at the workshops organized by USAID advisors in Lashkar Gah. "Previously," said Muhammad, "our meetings would be unorganized for lack of clarity; but now we establish a clear agenda and follow it during meeting."

Ahmadullah, a Public Health Department staffer, also appreciated the program. "Our work has become far more focused and clear," he said.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Primary Students to Get 6,000 Computers: USAID and Roshan, a private telecom operator in Afghanistan, will provide 6000 computers for primary school students in Afghanistan. Developed by the *One Laptop per Child* global education initiative, the computers are specially designed to assist children in the world's poorest countries. The durable laptops can be recharged with solar energy, come with pre-designed software, and have capacity for Internet connection so children can learn collaboratively.

Laptops will initially be distributed at 500 schools in Kabul and later throughout Afghanistan's provinces. The Roshan mobile company has pledged to provide free Internet service to schools across the country, and USAID will install and maintain the computers. To ensure that children can benefit from these tools, schoolteachers will receive computer skills training.

Woman's Business Center Opens in the Wakhan: To help develop small and medium-sized businesses in the Afghanistan's remote Badakhshan Province, USAID supported 25 female entrepreneurs in establishing a Woman's Business Centre in the Wakhan Corridor. Once part of the famous the Silk Road, this mountainous and relatively secure region is becoming a popular destination for foreign tourists interested in Afghanistan's history. This summer the women saw their first sales of local products to the Wakhan's new tourists. The project hopes that these women will be able to produce a greater range of products targeted at this rapidly growing 'high end' market.



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New Loans Spark Growth: The USAID-funded Afghanistan Rural Finance Company recently approved four loans totalling USD \$448,000 to three construction firms and one carpet and handicraft production company in Balkh, Parwan, and Kabul provinces. The loans will help build borrowers' businesses by enabling them to buy new equipment access to additional working capital, hire new staff, and expand their operations. USAID loans create a significant number of jobs in the country. The loans to the four borrowers in September are expected to create nearly 500 additional jobs in Afghanistan.



Entrepreneurs used USAID loans to open a new carpet company in Balkh.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan



Fourteen community leaders discussed their role in the development of Uruzgan province.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

Uruzgan's Community Leaders Develop Financial Services:

On September 3rd, USAID supported an advisory session with the community leaders in Uruzgan's Islamic Investment and Finance Cooperative (IFC). Fourteen community leaders representing eleven villages of the province actively participated in the session. The meeting focused on their role in the socio-economic development of the province and how to increase their community's access to financial services. Ongoing discussions with the community leaders are critical given the community ownership and sustainability mission of the IFCs. Uruzgan is located in the southern region of Afghanistan, which is known as one of the most insecure,

opium-producing areas of the country. To date, the Uruzgan IFC has disbursed USD \$36,500 to 73 borrowers.